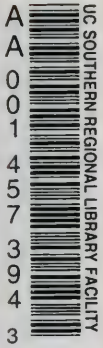


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THOUGHTS ON THE
ADMISSION OF
PERSONS WITHOUT
REGARD TO THEIR
RELIGIOUS
OPINIONS





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THOUGHTS
ON THE
ADMISSION OF PERSONS
WITHOUT REGARD TO THEIR RELIGIOUS OPINIONS
TO CERTAIN DEGREES
IN THE
UNIVERSITIES OF ENGLAND.

BY THOMAS TURTON, D.D.

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THOUGHTS,

&c.

IT occurred to me not long ago—when turning in my mind the admission of persons to certain Academical Degrees, without any regard to religious tenets—that the sentiments of one who, for many years after he became a Master of Arts, filled the office of a College Tutor—has ever since devoted his time and attention to the service of the University—and, what is of some moment, has throughout life stood aloof from political contention—might deserve consideration, on a subject of that nature. Although I then felt that, on the grounds just stated, I should be warranted in publicly expressing the result of my reflections, on a point of so much importance, yet the sort of controversy, which had been excited, deterred me from taking such a step. I am however now satisfied that it would be a dereliction of duty, to suffer the occasion to pass away, without recording my opinions on the matter in dispute. But let it be observed, that I have no

intention to animadvert upon any thing that has been written on either side of the question; and that it is my design simply to lay before the reader the impressions of my own mind.

The failure of the antient philosophers, in many of their speculations, has in modern times been uniformly attributed to their neglect of experiment; and it is one great object, in the education afforded by our Academical Institutions, to enforce these important truths—viz. that the sciences which engage the student's attention are founded on fact—and that the results which are presented to him may be shewn to accord with the actual constitution of things. Having been trained up to this mode of conducting my inquiries, I am habitually distrustful of theories; and I am the more confirmed in my distrust, by the knowledge that a theory must be bad indeed, which does not become plausible, when recommended by ingenious and eloquent men. When therefore I found that a Bill had been brought into the House of Commons which, if passed into an Act of Parliament, would make it “lawful for all His Majesty's Subjects to enter and matriculate in the Universities of England, and to receive and enjoy all Degrees in Learning conferred therein (Degrees in Divinity alone excepted) without being required to subscribe any Articles of Religion, or to make any declaration of religious opinions respecting particular modes of Faith and Worship”—I immediately asked myself whe-

ther any plan of proceeding, at all similar to this, had ever been tried in this country—and, if so, what had been its effects. I soon recollected that a very similar plan *had* been tried, on a scale sufficiently large, and for a time sufficiently long, to give some indications of the consequences which would be produced, by the proposed measure, in “the Universities of England.”

It is well known that Dr Doddridge was, for more than twenty years, at the head of an Academical Establishment for the instruction of young men; and that “the constitution of his Academy was,” as Dr Kippis has expressed it “perfectly catholic*.” Subsequently to the death of Dr Doddridge, the Institution was conducted, on the original plan, by persons of considerable eminence. My immediate object, therefore, will be to trace, by means of such authentic accounts as I can discover, the operation of the system; which I shall be able to do through a period of sixty years:—but before I proceed to my undertaking, it is right to state, that I have great respect for the learning, talents and moral worth of Dr Doddridge—and that it is not

* Kippis’s Life of Doddridge. It is from this work, as well as from Orton’s Life of Doddridge, that I have derived most of the particulars mentioned in my account of the Academy over which that eminent divine presided. Orton and Kippis had been Pupils of Dr Doddridge, and were warmly attached to their Preceptor. It is scarcely necessary to state that the Preceptor and his Pupils were zealous non-conformists. By the term “perfectly catholic” is meant, that students of any sect of religion were admissible.

without satisfaction that I recollect that some of his best works fell into my hands very early in life.

In 1729, Doddridge opened his Academy at Northampton, his principal object being the education of students for the Ministry; but to the end of his life he also received, as pupils, young men of fortune who had other views. Although he was himself a believer in the Trinity and the Atonement, he never seems to have considered Arian or Socinian sentiments as any bar to the admission of individuals to his house and lecture-room. In fact, many young men, holding sentiments of that kind, were his pupils, during his two-and-twenty years' services as a public tutor. Let us now endeavour to ascertain some of the first consequences of this free admission to the benefits of education, under this learned, and, in the main, Orthodox divine.

In the course of a few years, the increased number of Doddridge's pupils rendered it necessary that he should have an assistant, or sub-tutor; and we find the following names of persons who sustained that character:—Aikin, Robertson, Orton, Clark*. Of Robertson's tenets I can give

* Dr Aikin was afterwards the Theological Tutor at Warrington. He was the father of the *late* Dr Aikin, and Mrs Barbauld... Mr James Robertson was subsequently Professor of Oriental Literature at Edinburgh... Of Mr Job Orton, whose writings are well known, mention has already been made... Mr Samuel Clark was afterwards a Dissenting Minister at Birmingham.

no account; but Aikin, Orton and Clark, (as, I believe, there is no doubt) were Arians, at the least. Now, if Doddridge had admitted, as pupils, those only whose religious sentiments accorded with his own, I think it most improbable that he would have associated with himself, in the business of tuition, the Gentlemen above named. This therefore I deem to be one of the natural consequences of the diversity of belief prevailing amongst the students of the Northampton Academy.

Let us now consider the mode of lecturing adopted under the same circumstances. Dr Kippis describes it in terms which I shall strictly retain. Being an Unitarian, he is of course pleased with the tale he has to tell.

“ Having laid a firm foundation in so ample a statement of the evidences of Christianity, he (Dr Doddridge) entered into a copious detail of what were, or, at least, what appeared to him to be, the doctrines of Scripture. In so doing, though he stated and maintained his own opinions, which in a considerable degree were Calvinistical, he never assumed the character of a dogmatist. He represented the arguments, and referred to the authorities on both sides. The students were left to judge for themselves; and they did judge for themselves, with his perfect concurrence and approbation; though, no doubt, it was natural for him to be pleased when their sentiments coincided with his own. Where this was not the case, it made no alteration in his affection and kind treatment, as the writer of the present narrative can gratefully witness.”

Here again, we may observe the working of the same system. It is almost impossible to

imagine that, if Doddridge's pupils had all been brought up in the same belief with himself, he would have exposed them to the perils with which such a mode of lecturing was fraught. He *must* have felt, in that case, that it would have been like turning them adrift upon the ocean, amidst the war of elements.

There are other respects in which the state of things at the Academy—arising, as it should seem, from the same plan of proceeding—is not unworthy of remark. For what I am now about to adduce, I have again had recourse to Dr Kippis.

“How sincerely Dr Doddridge detested the want of integrity in character, was displayed in the following fact. One of his pupils was in the habit of making a jest of what is called Orthodoxy, and of ridiculing those who adhered to it; and this he continued to do, up to the time in which he began to preach. Then, to the no small surprise of his intimate acquaintance, it was rumoured, that in the congregations where he had officiated in the neighbourhood of Northampton, he had appeared highly Calvinistical, and indeed much more so than almost any other of his fellow-students. For obvious reasons he declined ever preaching at Northampton. At length, the affair was brought before the Doctor; and both parts of the charge having been proved by decisive evidence, the young man was dismissed. Being a person of some fortune, he was not involved by his disgrace in any pecuniary difficulty.”

From the preceding account of this wretched young man, it does not appear that there was thought to be any great harm in his “habit of

making a jest of what is called Orthodoxy"—and "of ridiculing those who adhered to it," although his Tutor was one of those who did so adhere. However, it is satisfactory to learn that, having laughed at Calvinists up to the moment when he turned Calvinist himself, he really was dismissed. Through the whole of this proceeding, the only point that seems to have been thought of importance, either by Dr Doddridge or his biographer, was the want of *integrity* in the young man.

By means of circumstances, such as have now been detailed, we are enabled to form some estimate of the nature and tendency of a "perfectly catholic" Institution—comprising young men brought together without any regard to their religious opinions. It ought indeed to be recollected that, in the midst of students, who were thus fitted for the Ministry, lived young men of fortune, who were qualifying themselves for their respective stations in society. Surrounded as those gentlemen were by every thing that was discordant in religion, I will leave it to the reader to imagine with what kind of impressions on that important subject they would close their Academical course. As to the effects of the system of education upon the Divinity Students—it is well known to have been a subject of lamentation to all—whether Churchmen or those Dissenters, who have held, with Dr Doddridge, the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement—that the results, of the plan of instruction pursued at Northampton, should have been so disastrous.

There was a vagueness and indecision of language, in the discourses of the young ministers who had been trained in that Seminary, which made it a matter of uncertainty whether they really had any positive opinions at all, on some of the most momentous points that can occupy the attention of mankind; while the faith of many others being shaken, by the debateable form in which every doctrine was presented to them, they exposed to danger the faith of entire congregations subsequently committed to their charge*.

At the time of Dr Doddridge's death, Mr Clark—already mentioned as an abettor of Arian sentiments—was the Sub-tutor, at Northampton. Dr Kippis thinks that Mr Clark would have been a very proper person to carry on the business of the Academy; but this does not seem to have been the opinion of Dr Doddridge, who, in his Will, mentioned Dr Caleb Ashworth, as the person whom he wished to be his successor, “to perpetuate those schemes which he had formed for the public service.” In accordance with Dr Doddridge's recommendation, Dr Ashworth was appointed, by

* Of Mr Hugh Farmer, one of the earliest and most eminent of Dr Doddridge's pupils, we are told that “he was particularly excellent in the pulpit, and that his sermons were rational, spiritual, evangelical, and not unfrequently pathetic; that he had an admirable talent, without trimming, of pleasing persons of very different sentiments; and that when he was speaking of the doctrines of the Gospel, there was a swell in his language, that looked as if he was rising to a greater degree of Orthodoxy in expression than some persons might approve; *but it never came to that point.*” Biog. Dict.

Mr Coward's Trustees,* to be the principal Tutor of the Academy; and this Gentleman, having engaged Mr Clark as his associate in the tuition, removed the establishment to Daventry, in the year 1751... The Gospel doctrines—when explained, as required by Mr Coward's Will, by the Assembly's Catechism—must have been understood in a Calvinistic sense; and therefore if Mr Clark, an Arian, had been placed at the head of the Academy, it would have been a strange method of carrying Mr Coward's designs into effect. Dr Ashworth having been understood to agree in opinions with Dr Doddridge, the Trustees may be considered as having at that time made a judicious appointment... We have now to ascertain in what manner the Trinitarian Tutor and the Arian Sub-tutor contrived to carry on the education of a set of young men, holding religious opinions in as great variety as can well be imagined.

Of the state of things, after the Academy had been placed under Dr Ashworth's management, a pretty accurate judgement may be formed, from

* William Coward, Esq. bequeathed a considerable estate for the education of Dissenting Ministers, and for other religious purposes. The mode in which Mr Coward wished the education of Dissenting Ministers to be conducted may be learned from the following words, extracted from his Will: "My will is, that my said Trustees, and those who shall succeed them as hereinafter directed, do take care that the said students be well instructed in the true Gospel doctrines, according as the same are explained in the Assembly's Catechism." I am inclined to think that the *Northampton* Academy derived advantage, during the latter years of its existence, from Mr Coward's Trustees; but of this I am not certain.

Dr Priestley's account of his residence there, as a student, from 1752 to 1755; a residence to which he seems to have looked back with the utmost delight. On this subject, he thus writes, in the *Memoirs of his own Life*:

“In my time, the Academy was in a state peculiarly favourable to the serious pursuit of truth; as the students were about equally divided upon every question of much importance, such as Liberty and Necessity, the sleep of the soul, and all the Articles of Theological Orthodoxy and Heresy; in consequence of which, all these topics were the subject of continual discussion. Our tutors also were of different opinions; Dr Ashworth taking the Orthodox side of every question, and Mr Clark, the sub-tutor, that of Heresy, though always with great modesty*.”

Such were the circumstances which, on a calm review of his life, Dr Priestley deemed “peculiarly favourable to the serious pursuit of truth”—in the case of young students. If, in commenting on this subject, I were to employ the language which it naturally suggests, I should probably be thought, by some, to exhibit that narrowness of mind which, in their estimation, the education of a Churchman seldom fails to produce. In this emergency, it fortunately happens that I can avail myself of the remarks of a celebrated non-conformist; and the language of Mr Robert Hall, which I shall shortly have occasion to adduce, expresses my own sentiments on the subject—but more strongly perhaps than it would become me to express them.

* *Memoirs*, p. 17, ed. 1806.

Some time after the period which has just been reviewed, Mr Clark retired from the Academy at Daventry, and a Mr Robins supplied his place. In 1766, at the age of 17, Mr Belsham, so well known in after life by reason of his Theological speculations, became a student at the Academy, under Dr Ashworth and Mr Robins. At this period there is good evidence that the method (described by Dr Priestley) of instructing young men in the Gospel according to the Assembly's Catechism, was in full force; and that the consequences were as remarkable as ever.

In 1771, Mr Thomas Toller, afterwards a Dissenting Minister at Kettering, became a student at the Daventry Academy. Of the state of things at this æra, I shall present the reader with the following account, from the pen of the late Mr Robert Hall.

“At the early age of fifteen, his parents sent him to the Academy at Daventry, over which Dr Ashworth, the worthy successor of the celebrated Dr Doddridge, presided: his assistant in the Academy was the Rev. Mr Robins, who afterwards occupied the same station with distinguished ability. Of both his Tutors he was wont to speak in terms of high respect. Of Mr Robins he was often heard to say, that he considered him as the wisest and the best man he ever knew. Among many other mental endowments, he was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and, perhaps, my readers will excuse my observing, that the first perception of these qualities, which the writer of these lines remembers to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach on a public occasion. It is to be lamented that he has left none of those productions behind him, which a correct and

beautiful imagination, embodied in language of the most classic purity, rendered so delightful. The qualities of his heart corresponded to those of his genius; and though, long before his death, his bodily infirmities obliged him to relinquish a commanding station and retire into obscurity, he retained to the last such an ascendancy over the minds of his former pupils, and such an interest in their affections, as nothing but worth of the highest order can command*.”

From the preceding account of the Daventry Tutors, it is clear that there was no want of inclination, on the part of Mr Hall, to place in the fairest light the system of instruction pursued by those learned men; and therefore, in order that the reader may form some judgement of the value of that system, I request his attention to the following statement, which is contained in the very next paragraphs of Mr Hall’s Memoir of Mr Toller.

“ At the time of Mr Toller’s admission into the Daventry Academy, the literary reputation of that seminary was higher than that of any [other] among the Dissenters; but partly owing to a laxness in the terms of admission, and partly to the admixture of lay and divinity students, combined with the mode in which Theology was taught, erroneous principles prevailed much; and the majority of such as were educated there became more distinguished for their learning, than for the fervour of their piety, or the purity of their doctrine. . . . The celebrated Priestley speaks of the state of the Academy, while he resided there, with great complacency: nothing, he assures us, could be more favourable to the progress of free inquiry; since both the tutors and the students were about equally divided between the Orthodox and Arian systems. The arguments by which every possible modification of error is attempted to be supported were carefully mar-

* Works, Vol. iv. p. 306.

shalled in hostile array against the principles generally embraced; while the Theological Professor prided himself on the steady impartiality with which he held the balance betwixt the contending systems, seldom or never interposing his own opinion, and still less betraying the slightest emotion of antipathy to error, or predilection to truth. Thus a spirit of indifference to all religious principles was generated in the first instance, which naturally paved the way for the prompt reception of doctrines indulgent to the corruption, and flattering to the pride, of a depraved and fallen nature. . . . To affirm that Mr Toller sustained no injury from being exposed at so tender an age to this vortex of unsanctified speculation and debate, would be affirming too much, since it probably gave rise to a certain general manner of stating the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel which attached chiefly to the earlier part of his ministry; though it is equally certain that his mind, even when he left the Academy, was so far imbued with the grand peculiarities of the Gospel, that he never allowed himself to lose sight of the doctrine of the cross, as the only basis of human hope*.”

Mr Hall, then, was well aware of the mischief attending the Daventry system of education; and we find the mischief attributed by him to three causes:—1. “A laxness in the terms of admission;” 2. “The admixture of lay and divinity students;” and 3. “The mode in which Theology was taught.” In what way “the admixture of lay and divinity students” is of itself injurious to Religion, I do not understand; but I can easily perceive that, when combined with “laxness in the terms of admission,” and a faulty mode of teaching theology, it will tend to multiply the evils complained of, to a degree which it is fearful to contemplate. The main difference

* Works, Vol. iv. pp. 307, 308.

between Mr Hall and myself consists in this—that he attributes certain effects to “laxness in the terms of admission” and “the mode of instruction” conjointly; while I attribute every thing in the first instance to “laxness in the terms of admission.” I take this view of the subject, because it appears to me that, unless young men are admitted with an utter disregard to their religious opinions, no Lecturer would be so devoid of sense—to say nothing of conscience—as to “hold the balance betwixt contending systems”—in the manner described by Mr Hall—“without betraying the slightest emotion of antipathy to error, or predilection to truth.”

Mr Robins was the principal (Theological) Tutor at Daventry from 1775 to 1781; when he resigned his appointment, on account of ill health. Mr Coward’s Trustees—still, I suppose, with a view of “taking care that the students should be well instructed in the true Gospel doctrines, according as the same are explained in the Assembly’s Catechism”—then placed Mr BELSHAM at the head of the Institution. At that period, indeed, Mr Belsham does not appear to have abandoned the doctrine of our Lord’s pre-existence; but, in pursuance of the Daventry system, he endeavoured to “hold the balance with steady impartiality.” How successfully he carried Mr Coward’s intentions into effect, will be manifest from the following account, which he has given, in his *Life of Lindsey*, of his method of tuition and the result of his labours:

“Now the plan which to the author appeared most eligible for conducting the minds of his pupils on this Inquiry, was to form a collection of all the texts in the New Testament which in any way related to the person of Christ, and to arrange them under different heads, beginning with simple pre-existence, and advancing through the various intermediate steps to the doctrine of the proper deity of Christ. Under each text was introduced the comment of one or more learned and approved Trinitarian, Arian, or Unitarian Expositors, in the commentator’s own words, and in general without any additional, or at least doctrinal comment of the compiler’s own; as it was his wish to leave the texts thus expounded to make their proper impression upon the minds of his pupils.”

“The first consequence of this mode of conducting the Lectures was to himself very unexpected and mortifying. Many of his pupils, and of those some of the best talents, the closest application, and the most serious dispositions, who had also been educated in all the habits and prepossessions of Trinitarian doctrine, to his great surprise became Unitarians.”

This surely is a striking exemplification of the effects of such a plan of instruction as we have been considering. . . . Soon afterwards, that scale of the balance which contained the Unitarian arguments having obtained a decided preponderance—in short, Mr Belsham having become a complete Unitarian of the modern school—he began to question his own fitness for executing the purposes of Mr Coward’s Will. In 1789, after very mature deliberation, he resigned his office; and (to use his own expression) “took leave of a flourishing seminary of estimable pupils.” . . . Beyond this period, it is not my intention to trace the history of the Daventry Academy.

Every thing that has come to light with regard to this Institution, from 1729 to 1789, conspires to prove the ruinous consequences of that system of education which is the inevitable result of bringing together, as fellow-students, great numbers of young men, without any regard to their religious sentiments. In addition to the opinions of Mr Hall, on this momentous subject, which I have already quoted, I recommend to the reader's attention the following extract from the same writer's "Address in behalf of a Baptist Academical Institution at Stepney;" in which he states his views of the plan of instruction to be there adopted.

"With regard to the principles we wish to see prevail in our future seminary, it may be sufficient to observe, they are in general the principles of the Reformation; and were we to descend to a more minute specification, we should add, they are the principles which distinguish the body of Christians denominated Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. While we feel a cordial esteem for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity—disclaiming all pretensions to that vaunted liberality which masks an indifference to revealed truth, we feel no hesitation in declaring, that nothing would give us more concern than to see the seminary we have in contemplation become the organ of infidel or heretical pravity*."

The opinion—that Religion must be taught on some definite plan—when avowed by so celebrated a non-conformist as Mr Hall, cannot but be allowed to have weight; but lest it should be said that, although he was a great man in his day, the non-conformists of these times entertain more enlarged

* Works, Vol. 1v. p. 413.

notions of the purposes of education. I shall here transcribe the sentiments of one of the most eminent persons, amongst the Dissenters, now living: I mean the Theological Tutor at Homerton—Dr J. P. Smith. On Mr Belsham's mode of Lecturing he thus writes:

“To throw down before a company of inexperienced youths, a regular set of rival and discordant expositions, appears to me to have been a method not well calculated to lead into the path of convincing evidence and well ascertained truth. It might excite party feeling, wordy disputation, unholy levity, and rash decision; but, so far as either from the theory of the case or from experience, I am able to form a judgement, I could not expect a better result, except in rare cases indeed. Difficult is the task to assist, in the personal and successful search after sacred truth, young minds whose judgement is immature, their experience nothing, their reading hitherto scanty, their conceptions eager, and their self-opinion often strong. If in relation to this subject, I may presume to express my opinion and my wishes, they would be to demand, in the first place, certain pre-requisites for the study: good intellectual powers, the habit of deliberate and patient thought, a respectable acquaintance with the language, style and idiomatical peculiarities of the inspired writers, a memory well stored with the contents of the Bible, some practice in Theological reading, and, above all, and without which all the rest will be nugatory, a heart governed by genuine piety, humility, the spirit of prayer, and love to God as the God of perfect holiness*.”

Having now detailed the result of the experiment, which has been fully tried in our own country, of educating *together* young men, greatly differing in religious opinions—and having stated the senti-

* Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, Vol. 1. p. 160.

ments of thinking persons, not belonging to the Established Church, on the subject—I will proceed to consider the bearing of the case upon “the Universities of England.”

The non-conformist Tutor of the Daventry Academy was, as the reader is aware, required, by the Will of the non-conformist Mr Coward, to instruct the students committed to his care, in the principles of religion as laid down in the Assembly’s Catechism. I therefore conclude that, even the non-conformists themselves being judges, there is nothing wrong in Christians, by whatever name they may be designated, teaching, in their own seminaries of education, the principles of religion as laid down in such formularies as, after due inquiry, they conscientiously believe to contain the truth. This is what I claim for the Members of the Church of England.

Again, many non-conformists have described the effects which have arisen, and cannot but arise, from a continued residence, in the same place of instruction, of young men widely differing from each other in Theological sentiments—as highly injurious to the cause of Religion. An entire agreement with these non-conformists, in this matter, I take the liberty of avowing, on the part of the Members of the Church of England.

Lastly, to avoid the evils consequent upon the plan of education last mentioned, non-conformists

of different denominations have founded Academies, in each of which, to youths of their own communion, those principles of Religion alone are taught, which are in agreement with their own peculiar views. For the Members of the Church of England I claim the same privilege.

In “the Universities of England,” this privilege has long been enjoyed, with undoubted advantage to the cause of Religion and to the best interests of the Nation at large. Let us endeavour to trace its mode of operation. . . . A young man, on commencing residence in one of our Universities, finds himself consigned to a Tutor—as it were to another Parent; and he at once regards his associates as members of the same family with himself. There is no necessity for him to be on the reserve, till he can ascertain to what sect of religion any one belongs; for he is aware that, on the most important of all concerns, but one feeling exists. Nor does any thing occur, to disturb the prevailing sympathy. On the contrary, every thing tends to give it new force. The daily service—the occasional Sacrament—the Lectures—the intercourse with those to whom is entrusted the government of the Society to which he belongs—all conspire to impress upon his mind the reflection that, in common with those around him, he is a Member of the Church of England. To him, at his youthful time of life, religion is communicated, not in general terms—not through the turbid medium of controversy—but as it was understood by the Fathers of the Protestant Church

of England:—a Church by which, in maturer years—when he shall have fully ascertained the foundations on which it rests—we trust that he will be content to stand or fall. It is for this end that, for a season, he is committed to our keeping; and for this we hold it to be our duty to provide.

Amongst the younger students of the Universities as at present constituted, every thing wears the aspect of tranquillity. They have nothing to unsettle their minds. They are—taking them as a body—assiduously pursuing their studies, and qualifying themselves for the stations for which they are designed. Is it wise, under such circumstances, to run the risk of all the consequences of introducing, amongst them, numbers of men, concerning whose religion all inquiry would be expressly forbidden by Act of Parliament? Surely it would be to make arrangements for confusion.

We have seen the effects of great diversity of belief, amongst the students at Daventry; and we may rely upon it that those effects were not accidental:—they were such as will always be produced by the same cause. In nothing is the ardent mind of youth more ardent than, when once excited, in matters of Religion. It is by no means improbable that, should the proposed Bill become the Law of the Land, persons trained in controversy would be entered at the Universities, for the very purpose of producing the results we deprecate; and, most certainly, their appearance, like that of

the *petrel*, would announce the storm. In such a case, it is greatly to be feared that, amidst conflicting passions, both reason and religion would be alike disregarded. Nor is there the slightest hope that the agitation would cease. Tutors of Colleges, indeed, would take part with the Churchmen, whose religious interests it is their peculiar duty to watch over; but in process of time would arise (as I am well convinced) a race of men "priding themselves," like the Daventry Tutors, "on the steady impartiality with which they held the balance between contending systems." When, in addition to all this, it is considered that, after the lapse of a few years, there would be residing in the Universities, as Bachelors and Masters of Arts, men privileged by Act of Parliament to teach their pupils any religion whatever, we have before us the elements of such a scene of disorder as it requires no ordinary nerves to contemplate.

The higher and the middle classes of society, in this country, are yet sound at the heart. They reverence the law of God, and are conscientiously attached to the National Church. It is no wonder that, amongst them, there should be so much alarm, at the prospects which are opening upon "the Universities of England." When an Act of Parliament shall have made it "lawful for all His Majesty's Subjects to enter and matriculate in those Universities, and to receive and enjoy all Degrees in Learning conferred therein (Degrees

in Divinity alone excepted) without being required to subscribe any Articles of Religion, or to make any declaration of religious opinions respecting particular modes of Faith and Worship"—will such persons, as I have alluded to, so far disregard the principles of their lives, as to trust those, in whom their hopes are bound up, to that "vortex of unsanctified speculation and debate," which will then inevitably await every young man when entering upon his Academical course? Many, very many, of those rightly-minded persons will reluctantly forego, for their children, the advantages arising from the learning and science that might be acquired; being sustained in their determination by reflecting on the perils which had been avoided, in matters of the deepest concernment to their offspring, as moral and religious creatures.

When, in short, we consider, on the one hand, the far-extended alienation of mind, with regard to the Universities, which would be produced in the manner just pointed out—and, on the other, the number of young men who, beyond doubt, would leave the Universities with understandings bewildered by the jargon of controversy—we cannot but behold, in such results, not merely the indications of a general breaking up of the constitution of the country, but symptoms which, combined with many others, would actually produce that sad catastrophe. That many non-conformists, who are earnestly pressing forward the

Bill now before the House of Commons, are anticipating such consequences—is by no means improbable; but that those Members of the Universities, who are favourable to the measure, ever thought of such a result—I do not believe.

We know, from the declarations of many non-conformists, that there exists amongst them a strong resolution to effect, if possible, the disruption of the Church from the State. Now, no one will deny that, with such intentions, the Universities are the very places which they would themselves select, for the purpose of commencing their operations. There they would be glad to insert the wedge—there to rest the lever.—When the degree of Master of Arts is rendered accessible to non-conformists, the folding-doors of the House of Convocation at Oxford, and the Senate-House at Cambridge, will be thrown wide open; and great power will be given to, it is impossible to mention what, numbers of persons—who may employ it to very pernicious objects. There are few sayings which have more truth in them than this—that you know not what a man really is, till you have invested him with power and authority. That is the great test of his trust-worthiness. What is true of an individual is equally so when applied to many, co-operating with one design; and the consequences which may arise in the latter case are by far the most alarming. To whatever ill purposes the possession of power may be applied by an individual, his abuse of trust

must come to an end at some time or other, and may come very soon. But when persons act together, and receive constant accessions in point of numbers, they become virtually a body corporate; and their power of doing mischief is, like property held in mortmain, for ever.

There are, amongst the non-conformists, many who agree with the Members of the Church of England, in the great doctrines of the Reformation:—who would lament to see a flood of dangerous speculation and cold scepticism and reckless infidelity overspreading the land—and are well aware of the effect of the unwarrantable contentions, in which young fellow-students widely differing in religion never fail to engage, in producing those evils. During a season of popular excitement those non-conformists may not have observed the bearing of such considerations upon our two great Academical Establishments; but when the subject is thus fairly laid before them, it seems impossible for them to resist the conclusion that has been drawn. Let me therefore entreat them to pause and think what they are doing, when urging the Legislature to pass the Bill in question. They have had to lament the consequences of a plan of education on a small scale, similar to that which the Bill would sanction: let them not insist upon its being tried on a large scale. When an experiment is notorious for having been productive of evil, it ought not to be repeated. The results of the proceeding at Daventry need not be

confirmed by its application to “the Universities of England.”

Of this I am certain—that many non-conformists who have petitioned for throwing open the Universities to all—without respect to religious opinions—will feel that I have taken a correct view of the subject. I am also convinced, that, in their hearts, they will acknowledge that, in what I have now sent forth into the world, I have told the truth and done my duty.

Those who are at all acquainted with me will not suspect me of any inclination to lower the importance of learning and science, in the business of education. Many, I believe, will rather be disposed to think that I attach too great a value to them, in that point of view. It would, indeed, be a subject of the deepest regret to me to find the attention, which is now so profitably directed to learning and science, in any degree engaged by polemical divinity. Let me, at the same time, fairly state that, after well weighing the wants of man’s moral nature, and taking into account the various destinations of the students who resort for instruction to our two Universities, I cannot but consider learning and science not as ends, but as means—the means of strengthening the minds, and informing the understandings, of those who will shortly be required to undertake the duties which respectively await them in Church and State.

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